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\$10M shopping center proposed

Developers consider location on Lebanon Road in Mt. Juliet

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MT. JULIET — Two Wilson County men have teamed to build a \$10 million shopping center in an often overlooked area of Mt. Juliet on Lebanon Road near Hermitage.

"We're hoping to break ground in January," said Ben Forkum, a Lebanon real estate developer.

Forkum has joined with architect Mike Manous to develop Fountain Plaza, a lifestyle retail center on a 4.13-acre site at 12904 Lebanon Road in Mt. Juliet.

"It's going to serve Mt. Juliet and Hermitage. It's quite possible that we may even draw from Old Hickory and Donelson," Forkum said. "It's just such a great location."

About 270,000 people live within a 10-mile radius of the proposed development.

Manous and Forkum were scheduled to take their plan to the Mt. Juliet Planning Commission late last week for approval.

"The site is ready, and we're ready," Forkum said.

The men have received financial commitments from two banks willing to finance development of the center, he said.

The retail center will include 18 storefronts and will be anchored by a fountain in a roundabout. Developers plan to surround the retail area with 111 townhouses and 25 single-family homes.

A pedestrian bridge will link the residential development to the retail development.

"We're hoping for a couple of restaurants and some higher-end retail," Forkum said.

Forkum, who has developed Benton Harbor, Barton's Cove and Mt. Juliet Commons, said he isn't worried about the slow economy hampering his development prospects.

"I think with what the government is doing now is going to help retail. But our rates are going to be very reasonable," he said.

Leasing space will be priced at \$18 a square foot, which compares to \$20 in other parts of the county and \$30 in neighboring Rutherford County.